

**DECISION NOTICE  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT EFFECT**

**for  
NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT**

**on the  
DIXIE NATIONAL FOREST**

Washington, Iron, Wayne, Garfield, and Piute, Utah

82 North 100 East  
Cedar City, UT 84720

The Environmental Assessment (EA) for Noxious Weed Management on the Dixie National Forest discloses the environmental effects of using Integrated Pest Management techniques to control the invasion and spread of noxious weeds. The EA is available at the Dixie National Forest Supervisor's Office in Cedar City, Utah. I have reviewed the EA and related material and I base my decision upon that review.

An interdisciplinary Team (IDT) of resource specialists conducted this analysis and documented the results. In accordance with the National Forest Management Act and the National Environmental Policy Act, the IDT considered the affected area, formulated alternatives, and estimated environmental consequences based on Forest Plan goals, objectives, and standards and guidelines, together with issues raised during scoping.

**Purpose and Need**

The Dixie National Forest proposes:

- To emphasize a program to annually treat, through Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control methods, noxious weeds on National Forest System lands in southern Utah in parts of Washington, Iron, Wayne, Garfield, and Piute Counties on the Pine Valley, Cedar City, Powell, Escalante, and Teasdale Ranger Districts.
- Implicit in the implementation of a noxious weed program is the additional proposal to provide supporting noxious weed goals, objectives, management direction, and Forest-wide standards and guidelines through the amendment of the Forest Plan. Incorporated within this Environmental assessment is the proposal to amend the current Forest Plan.

**Decision**

Based on the analysis and evaluation described in the EA, it is my decision to implement the Proposed Action to implement Integrated Pest Management as the method for controlling noxious weeds and to concurrently amend the Forest Plan to provide for appropriate direction and standards and guidelines for

implementing the Proposed Action. Integrated Pest Management is a control strategy which allows the use of a combination of control methods, depending on what is most effective on the target noxious weed, with any applied restrictions. Under the Proposed Action, managers would implement a prevention and early detection strategy and would use biological, ground-based chemical, cultural, mechanical, or manual methods to control noxious weed infestations. To facilitate weed prevention and control efforts, this decision also amends the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan with eight new noxious weed objectives: 1) administration and planning; 2) Education and Awareness; 3) Prevention and Early Detection; 4) Coordination and Cooperation; 5) Inventory and Mapping; 6) Containment, Control, and Eradication; 7) Restoration; and 8) Research. These objectives include 28 new standards and guidelines giving direction in the management of noxious weeds on the Dixie National Forest. The weed prevention standard incorporates 70 new weed prevention measures associated with forest uses. A complete description of the Proposed Action, as well as a Noxious Weed Management and Control Strategy, is found in Chapter 1 of the EA.

### **Mitigation Measures**

My review has concluded that the mitigation requirements listed on page 2-8 of the EA, the weed prevention mitigation measures included in Appendix G, and the Safety Plan included in Appendix E are adequate to ensure the proper and safe application of herbicides on lands that may be treated in Forest Service vegetation management programs.

### **Monitoring**

The need for monitoring is pointed out in the Noxious Weed Management and Control Strategy section beginning on page 1-6 of the EA. Additional direction for inventorying, mapping, and monitoring to determine management emphasis for noxious weed treatment is included in the Forest Plan Amendment. The purpose of all monitoring activities will be to ensure that management objectives of prevention, containment, and eradication are being achieved. If monitoring results differ substantially from those discussed in the EA, a determination of the cause will be made and corrective actions will be identified and implemented.

### **Public Notice and Comment**

In response to the Notice and Comment period which began on January 31, 2000 and which was extended through March 1, 2000, four responses commenting on the noxious weed management environmental assessment were received. This interest in the proper management of resources on the Dixie National Forest is important. Appreciation is extended to those who have taken time to provide comments on this environmental assessment. Each comment was carefully considered with respect to the need to modify or supplement the EA with any new information provided. Important in this process of considering revision of the EA is the answer to this question, "Is the EA consistent with the Dixie Forest Plan and does it satisfy the requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) with respect to the particular comment?" My review indicates that this environmental assessment does satisfy the requirements of NEPA and CEQ and meets the intent of regulations. Therefore no changes in the conclusions drawn by the EA is prompted.

The responses to comments received during the Notice and Comment period were mailed to the respondents on April 12, 2000 and therefore are not attached to this Decision Notice.

## **Modifications of the EA following Public Notice and Comment Period**

None. No comments were received which suggested the need for modifying alternatives, adding alternatives, making factual corrections, or supplementing the analysis.

## **Rationale for the Decision**

Noxious weeds pose an increasing threat to the integrity of wildland ecosystems. New populations can spread approximately 10% to 25% each year. The Forest Service (FS) has the lead responsibility for noxious weed coordination for the Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the authority contained in the Noxious Weed Act of 1974 and the USDA Policy 9500-10. Under this authority the FS developed the USDA Policy in 1990 and policy direction for the FS in 1991. FS policy was revised in 1995 (FSM 2080) to include new standards and refined direction for integrated pest management (IPM). The revised policy emphasizes the importance of integrating noxious weed management in ecosystem analysis, assessment, and forest planning.

- **1. Accomplishment of the Purpose and Need.** The Purpose and Need, as described in Chapter 1 of the EA, is met with the Proposed Action (Selected Action).
- **2. Consistency with the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan.** I have compared the details of my decision with the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) goals and objectives, as well as standards and guidelines (S&Gs), for consistency with the LRMP. Although the decision to emphasize IPM is consistent with the LRMP, the Forest Plan does not contain the necessary goals, objectives, management direction, and standards and guidelines to implement an aggressive noxious weed program that is in compliance with current National direction and Forest Service agency-wide and Regional emphasis and policies. The Forest Plan is also insufficient in addressing strategies for effecting prevention and control and the social and environmental effects these mitigation measures might have. By incorporating with this EA, an amendment to the Forest Plan which revises, replaces or adds noxious weed goals, objectives, management direction, and forest-wide standards and guidelines, consistency between the Proposed Action and the Forest Plan is assured.
- **3. Effects on the Environment and Responsiveness to Issues.** The detailed analysis in Chapter 4 of the EA discloses how the Proposed Action (the Selected Action) responds to the issues and affects the resources.

## **Public Involvement**

A scoping document describing the Proposed Action was mailed to 580 interested publics; including permittees, special interest groups, other agencies, congressional offices, and interested citizens; whose names are maintained on the Forest NEPA mailing list. This mailing list is included in the project file. This scoping analysis did not reveal the identification of any issues significant enough to drive the creation of any additional alternatives.

Besides the scoping effort discussed above, the EA was made available for public comment from January 31, 2000 through March 1, 2000 pursuant to 36 CFR 215.6. Five responses were timely received and/or postmarked in response to this 30-day Notice and Comment. All comments were addressed prior to issuing a Decision Notice.

### **Other Alternatives Considered**

The ID Team developed four potential alternatives to the Proposed Action and No Action alternatives. These alternatives were considered, but eliminated from detailed study. They are described in Chapter 2 of the EA, along with the rationale for not considering them in detail. The Regional FEIS, to which this Environmental Assessment is tiered, considered a range of six alternatives.

### **Compliance With The Forest Plan, Other Laws And Regulations**

Based on my review of the analysis presented in the EA, Chapter 4, and the supporting project file documentation, Biological Assessment, and concurrence from the USF&WS; I have determined that the Selected Action is in compliance with the Dixie National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (as amended pursuant to this EA), the National Forest Management Act of 1976, the Clean Water Act of 1948 (as amended in 1972 and 1987), the American Antiquities Act of 1906, the Historic Preservation Act of 1966, and the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended. In addition, no floodplains or wetlands will be affected as defined in Executive Orders 11988 and 11990.

Finally, I have determined that my decision is consistent with the Administrative Procedures Act. My decision is neither arbitrary nor capricious, but is based on careful review of the analysis process, findings for this project, public comment, and the purpose and need for action.

### **Finding Of No Significant Impact**

I have reviewed the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for significance (40 CFR 1509.27) and have determined that this action is not a major federal action, individually or cumulatively, and will not significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to Section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act is not required. This determination is based on the following factors:

- **1. Context of the Proposed Project.** The project will occur on a local level. Decisions made relative to noxious weed management are not expected to have any significant effects within or outside of this area, as defined in 40 CFR 1508.27 (EA, Chapter 4, Social/Economic section). The prescribed management practices are specific to meeting the stated purpose and need of noxious weed prevention, containment, and eradication. They are not part of any larger decisions at the Regional or National level.
- **2. Intensity of the Proposed Project.** "Intensity" refers to the severity of impact. The following ten factors were evaluated in determining the intensity of the effects of the proposed project:
  - a. Beneficial and adverse effects from the Selected Alternative are not significant. The effects described in the EA, Chapter 4, support this conclusion.

- b. Public health and safety are not adversely affected by the Selected Alternative. Mitigation measures as prescribed in the EA are intended to ensure the proper and safe application of herbicides.
- c. There are no areas within the Dixie National Forest, or cumulative effects areas, with unique geographic characteristics such as historic or cultural resources, parklands, prime farmlands, wild and scenic rivers, or ecological critical areas that are significantly affected by the Selected Alternative. This is documented in Chapter 3 of the EA.
- d. The effects of the Selected Alternative on the quality of the human environment are not highly controversial. These effects are disclosed in summary in the EA, Chapter 4.
- e. There are no known effects on the human environment that are highly uncertain or involve unique or unknown risks. All known effects are adequately discussed or referenced in the EA, Chapter 4, and were determined from professional experience, education, and/or scientific literature.
- f. These actions do not set a precedent for other projects that may be implemented to meet the goals and objectives of the LRMP. The Selected Alternative was specifically designed for noxious weed management, and addressed the site-specific purpose and need for this project.
- g. There are no known significant cumulative effects between this project and other projects implemented or planned in the area. This is substantiated in the cumulative effects discussion for each resource area in Chapter 4 of the EA.
- h. There are no known historic resources affected. While each site-specific noxious weed infestation, where mechanical treatment may occur, has not yet been reviewed by the Forest Archeologist, surveys will be completed prior to such treatment. If conflicts with historic resources arise, treatment methods will be modified or the site mitigated.
- i. There are no known federally listed (or proposed for listing) endangered or threatened plant or animal species within the Forest which will be adversely affected by the Selected Alternative (EA, Chapter 3, Table 4; EA, Chapter 4; Biological Assessment located in the Project File--incorporated by reference).
- j. The actions do not threaten a violation of Federal, State, or local laws or requirements imposed for the protection of the environment. My conclusion is based on a review of the EA, Chapter 4; concurrence with the Selected Action by the USF&WS; and based on the input from other federal, state, and county agencies which we have received to date on this project.

### **Implementation And Administrative Review**

This decision is subject to appeal pursuant to Forest Service regulations at 36 CFR 215.7. Any written appeal must be postmarked or received by the Appeal Deciding Officer, Regional Forester Jack A. Blackwell, Intermountain Region Office, 324 25th Street, Ogden, UT 84401, by May 30, 2000, which is 45 days following the April 14, 2000 date that the legal notice of this decision is published in the Spectrum High Country Daily News, Cedar City, Utah.

Appeals must meet content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. For further information on this decision, contact David R. Grider, Range Specialist, Dixie National Forest, 82 North 100 East, Cedar City, UT 84720 (435) 865-3700.

Implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, June 5, 2000 which is 5 business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of appeal disposition.

**RESPONSIBLE OFFICIAL**

*Mary Wagner*  
MARY WAGNER  
Forest Supervisor

APRIL 14, 2000  
DATE

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Intermountain  
Region

Dixie National  
Forest

January 2000



# **Environmental Assessment for Noxious Weed Management**

# **ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

## **NOXIOUS WEED MANAGEMENT DIXIE NATIONAL FOREST**

**WASHINGTON, IRON, KANE, WAYNE, GARFIELD, AND PIUTE COUNTIES**

**Responsible Agency:**

USDA, Forest Service

**Responsible Official:**

Mary Wagner  
Forest Supervisor  
Dixie National Forest

**For Further Information Contact:**

David R. Grider  
Range Specialist  
Dixie National Forest  
82 North 100 East  
Cedar City, UT 84720  
(435) 865-3700

### **ABSTRACT**

The Dixie National Forest proposes a program to control noxious weeds on National Forest System lands in southern Utah within Washington, Iron, Wayne, Garfield, and Piute Counties. Primary noxious weeds known to be established on the Dixie National Forest include Canada thistle, musk thistle, scotch thistle, spotted knapweed, Russian knapweed, dalmation toadflax, and whitetop. This Forest-level EA provides an analysis of the major noxious weed control considerations on the Dixie National Forest, including No Action and Integrated Pest Management (an integration of biological, ground-based herbicide applications, physical and mechanical, and cultural control methods). It provides site-specific and plant-specific analysis of the Proposed Action and is tiered to the Intermountain Region Noxious Weed and Poisonous Plant Control Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (October 1988).



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SUBJECT	PAGE
Vicinity Map	<i>i</i>
Project Area Map	<i>ii</i>
<b>CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION</b>	
Introduction	1-1
Need For Action	1-1
Acres Infested By Ranger District--Table	1-4
Proposed Action	1-5
Noxious Weed Strategy	1-6
Purpose of the Proposed Action	1-9
Decision To Be Made	1-10
Forest Plan Direction	1-11
Incorporation By Reference	1-12
<b>CHAPTER 2: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/ISSUES AND ALTERNATIVES</b>	
Introduction	2-1
Issues	2-2
Opportunities	2-3
Alternative Development	2-3
Alternatives Considered But Eliminated From Detailed Study	2-3
Alternatives Considered In Detail	2-4
Description of Alternatives	2-4
Mitigation Measures	2-8
Comparison of Alternatives--Table	2-11
<b>CHAPTER 3: AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT</b>	
Project Area	3-1
Existing Conditions--Noxious Weed Monographs	3-4
<b>CHAPTER 4: ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES</b>	
Introduction	4-1
Probable Environmental Effects That Cannot Be Avoided	4-1
Possible Conflicts With Other Jurisdictions	4-1
The Relationship Between Short-Term Uses and Long-Term Productivity	4-2
Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources	4-2
Reasonably Foreseeable Future Actions	4-2
Direct, Indirect, and Cumulative Effects--Table	4-3
Summary of Impacts by Alternative--Table	4-10
General Cumulative Effects	4-11
Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Plant Species	4-14
Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Wildlife Species	4-29
Sensitive Fish Species	4-38
<b>CHAPTER 5: LIST OF PREPARERS</b>	
List of Preparers	5-1
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
Appendix A: Dixie National Forest 1998 Noxious Weed Inventory	A-1
Appendix B: Herbicide Application Rates	B-1
Appendix C: Herbicides and Their Properties	C-1
Appendix D: TEPS Life History Summaries	D-4
Appendix E: Safety Plan	E-1
Appendix F: Proposed Forest Plan Amendment (Goals, Objectives, Forest Direction, Standards and Guides)	F-1
Appendix G: Weed Prevention Mitigation Practices	G-1
Appendix H: Pesticide Use Proposals	H-1
Appendix I: Literature Cited	I-1
Appendix J: Response To Scoping	J-1
Appendix K: Responses To 30-Day Notice and Comment (to be added)	K-1